

# HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION



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## STAFF REPORT

### Department of Growth Management

<b>MEETING DATE:</b>	September 3, 2025
<b>PROJECT:</b>	COFA-04-25-019686 215 Goethe Road New Construction: Mixed Use Building and Carriage House
<b>APPLICANT:</b>	Phil Madhere
<b>PROPERTY OWNERS:</b>	Leonex Construction Group
<b>PROJECT MANAGER:</b>	Charlotte Moore, AICP, Principal Planner

**APPLICATION REQUEST:** The Applicant, Phil Madhere, on behalf of owners, Leonex Construction Group, requests that the Historic Preservation Commission approve the following application:

A Certificate of Appropriateness to allow construction of a 3-story mixed use building of approximately 2,900 SF and a Carriage House of approximately 1,060 SF located at 215 Goethe Road within the May River Road development plan in the Old Town Bluffton Historic District, and zoned Neighborhood Core-HD (NC-HD).

**INTRODUCTION:** A COFA for this project was approved by the HPC on November 6, 2019 (COFA-07-19-0133313); however, as the plan expired, and new COFA application must be approved. The new application is the same proposal with some minor revisions.

The subject property is in an area referred to as “Goethe Road” development. On June 12, 2006 the Board of Zoning Appeals approved a variance request from the Village Commercial District standards to reduce the minimum lot size from 14,500 SF (residential) and 7,500 SF (commercial) to 5,000 SF for this property adjacent to Goethe Road and spanning from May River Road north to Dr. Mellichamp Drive. On February 6, 2007 the Development Plan was approved establishing the stormwater plan, site design and overall parameters of the development. A Subdivision Plan was approved then on March 9, 2007 and recorded creating 14 lots, establishing the common open space, easements, and on-street parking spaces.

The main structure is a mixed-use building that reflects the vernacular characteristics of Bluffton as well as a Main Street building type. The structure, to be constructed on a slab, will be housed under a front-facing gable roof with gabled dormers within the roofline on either side. A full-length porch under a shed roof is featured on the right (south) elevation at the ground and second floors; an exterior staircase will provide access to the second floor-

residence, which will encompass the entirety of the second and third stories. A full-façade fabric awning will extend the width of the building along the front ground floor elevation. Exterior materials are in keeping with the vernacular of Bluffton.

The Carriage House will be constructed on a slab and will be housed underneath a front-facing gable. A two-bay garage will be at the ground level; an accessory dwelling, to be accessed by an exterior staircase, will be located on the second floor. The service yard will be located underneath the stairs. Surface treatment from the “gravel road” into the garage is not shown. As the Carriage House is in close proximity to a 20’-0” Access Easement, it and any other related improvements cannot encroach into this easement.

This project was initially presented to the Historic Preservation Review Committee for Concept Plan review on April 28, 2025. The Applicant provided a response to all comments. (Attachment 6).

**REVIEW CRITERIA & ANALYSIS:** In its review of this COFA-HD application, Town Staff and the Historic Preservation Commission are required to consider the criteria set forth in Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) Section 3.18.3 (COFA-HD, New Construction and Alterations), applying the standards and guidelines of UDO Sec. 5.15, Old Town Bluffton Historic District. The intent of the standards and guidelines is, in part, to provide guidance and ensure predictable and compatible development and architecture without discouraging creativity or forcing the replication of historic models.

The applicable criteria of UDO Sec.3.18.3 are provided below followed by a Staff Finding based upon review of the application submittals to date.

1. **Consistency with the principles set forth in the Old Town Master Plan and Town of Bluffton Comprehensive Plan.**
  - a. *Finding.* The Old Town Master Plan initiatives also include the adoption of a form-based code that included architectural standards for structures located within the Old Town Bluffton Historic District. These standards are included in Article 5 of the UDO. The new construction proposed as part of this request will be in conformance with those standards if the conditions noted in item 2 of this Section are met.
  - b. *Finding.* The Old Town Master Plan initiatives also promote preservation and protection of the legacy of the Old Town Bluffton Historic District through additions to the built environment which make Old Town more complete. The addition of a proposed mixed-use structure and Carriage House add to the district and helps provide completeness to the neighborhood and overall district.
2. **The application must be in conformance with applicable provisions provided in Article 5, Design Standards.**

- a. *Findings.* Town Staff finds that if the conditions noted below are met, the proposed construction will be in conformance with applicable architectural design provisions provided in Article 5:
- 1) **Railings:** UDO Section 5.15.6.H.2.d. requires railings to be made of wood (termite resistant), or painted or natural wrought iron. Galvanized wire is proposed as an alternative baluster material. As such, a determination must be made on the appropriateness of the use of galvanized wire as a substitute material.
  - 2) **Building Proportions:** UDO Section 5.15.5.F.4. (Building Composition) and “Traditional Construction Patterns” Section 32 (Window Pane Proportions) emphasize proportionality of features. The UDO states that “Overall building proportions and individual building features shall have a proportional relationship with one another. For example, features such as porches, chimneys, cornices, windows and doors must be proportional to other features of the building as well as the overall building form.” Section 32 states that “window panes should be vertically proportioned or square.” On the north elevation of the main structure, both vertical and square windows are proposed. Additionally, ground floor vertical window height is taller than the square windows. A determination regarding the appropriateness of the window configuration must be made.
  - 3) **Service Yard:** The service yard for both the main structure and the Carriage House is shown underneath the Carriage House staircase. The Landscape Plan also shows an HVAC unit in the side yard on the north side of the Carriage House, which is not shown on the Site Plan. Both service yards must be screened in compliance with UDO Sec. 5.15.5.F. and the screen can be no taller than 6’-0” (the detail on Sheet A502 shows 6’-5”). The service yard area must be large enough to include HVAC units, utilities and receptacles. Utility meters must also be screened from public view.
  - 4) **Carriage House Ground Floor Door:** The north elevation for the Carriage House shows a door, which is not shown on the Site or Landscape Plans. The applicable plan(s) will need to be revised to show the intended elevation.
  - 5) **Porch Roof Pitch:** The porch roof pitch detail was updated to show a 3/12 pitch, but the elevations and sections shown 2/12. All references to a 2/12 pitch must be updated to show 3/12.
  - 6) **Proximity to Easement:** Improvements cannot be located in or encroach into the rear access easement. On the rear elevation of the carriage house, it appears that the trellis and awning extend into the access easement.

3. **Demonstration of a compatible visual relationship between new construction or alterations and existing buildings, streetscapes and open spaces. A compatible visual relationship must be generally of a similar structural mass, scale, height, proportion, directional expression of the principal elevation and rhythm of spacing, as applicable.**

*Finding.* If the conditions noted in #2 of this report are met, a compatible visual relationship will be demonstrated with surrounding properties, streetscapes and open spaces.

4. **Compliance with applicable requirements in the Applications Manual.**

*Finding.* The Certificate of Appropriateness Application has been reviewed by Town Staff and has been determined to be complete except for the applicable items in #2. Additionally, written approval from the Board of Directors of the Goethe Development will be required to ensure compliance with the private covenants, conditions and restrictions that govern the subject property.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:** It is the charge of the HPC to assess and interpret the standards and guidelines set forth in the UDO as they pertain to applications using the review criteria established in the UDO and to take appropriate action as granted by the powers and duties set forth Section 2.2.6.E.2. Town Staff finds that with the conditions noted below, the requirements of Section 3.18.3 of the Unified Development Ordinance have been met and recommends that the Historic Preservation Commission approve the application subject to the following conditions and determinations:

**Conditions:**

1. All service yards, as well as meters visible from the public right-of-way must be screened in compliance with UDO Sec. 5.15.5.F. The screen detail must be revised to show a height no taller than 6'-0".
2. Revise all plans (site, landscape and elevations) to be consistent.
3. Revise applicable plan sheets to show the main structure porch shed roof with a 3/12 pitch.
4. Remove the trellis and the awning on the rear elevation of the carriage house to prevent encroachment into the access easement.
5. Per the Applications Manual, written approval from the Board of Directors of the Goethe Road Association.

**Determinations:**

Determinations from the HPC are needed regarding:

1. The use of galvanized wire as a substitute material for the balusters.
2. The proportionality of the windows on the north elevation of the main structure.

**HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION ACTIONS:** As granted by the powers and duties set forth in Section 2.2.6.E.2, the Historic Preservation Commission has the authority to take the following actions with respect to this application:

1. Approve the application as submitted by the Applicant;
2. Approve the application with conditions; or
3. Deny the application as submitted by the Applicant.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

1. Location & Zoning Map
2. Application
3. Survey
4. Narrative
5. Site Plan
6. Photos
7. Drawings (Rev 08.15.2025)
8. Response to HPRC Comments (04.28.2025)
9. Landscape Plan (Rev 08.15.2025)